



Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session A: Friday, April 20, 11am – 12:15pm

Get Outside! Nature's Antidote to Screen Time

Cheryl Charles, Ph.D., & Lais Fleury

Here is an international perspective on how and why to reduce children's screen time through nature-based experiences, even in urban and low-income environments. Lais Fleury, director of Brazil's Children and Nature Initiative at the Alana Institute, and Cheryl Charles, co-founder and consultant for the Children & Nature Network's international efforts, offer research-based insights into the benefits of nature for children's health and well-being — physically, emotionally, cognitively and socially. They provide practical recommendations and resources for bringing nature into all children's everyday lives, wherever they live, learn, and play.

"Teaching Naked" Right from the Start: Keeping Screen Media Out of Infant/Toddler Classrooms

Patricia Cantor, Ed.D., Mary Cornish, Ph.D., & Susan Linn, Ed.D.

Infants and toddlers are living in a screen media saturated world. They are being subjected to screens even though the full impact of screen media on their learning and development is not yet fully understood — and even though research indicates there are reasons to be concerned. This session will explore the contexts in which very young children are being exposed to screens and the special considerations that arise for children under age 3. We will discuss the pressures infant/toddler teachers feel to employ screen media in their classrooms and the benefits of "teaching naked" — teaching without technology. We will also share ideas for engaging with families on the topic of screen media. This will be an interactive session, focused on how teachers and families can encourage healthy development, curiosity, play, and learning in infants and toddlers without the use of screen media.

A Method for Reducing Screen-Time: Encouraging Parents to SPOIL their Children

Meghan Owenz, Ph.D.

The S.P.O.I.L. system offers those working with parents a quick and easy way to overview the childhood activities that are often displaced by screen time *and* provide the strongest associations with positive child development. Caregivers can be encouraged to "put the big rocks in first," resulting in a more natural limiting of screen time. This back-to-basics approach encourages children and caregivers to engage in activities that are nearly always free and accessible to all families. The research on each area will be reviewed and specific ideas and strategies will be provided. When participants leave the session, they will have a system for presenting alluring alternatives to excessive screen time, one that is easy to remember and fun.

Biophysics to the Rescue: 'Embodiment' Repair for Damaged Nervous Systems

Bill Softky, Ph.D.

The modern attention-harvesting technology powering Facebook, Apple, and other Big Tech companies works so well that it slowly damages healthy nervous systems - mostly by interrupting continuous experience, and replacing "embodied" felt sensations with flat visual images. The experience of embodiment familiar from yoga, Pilates, meditation, dance, nature etc. can serve as a fast-acting antidote to accumulated digital toxins. In this session, you'll learn how data science creates technological superpowers to grab your attention, and how the biophysics of embodiment provides self-care for that digital damage. How and why is so much technology designed to grab our attention? How do these design strategies impact brains and bodies? How can we intervene? We will experience the most potent curative powers of these biophysical "hacks" through fun, simple, science-backed techniques, and discuss how they feel.

Breakout Session B: Friday, April 20, 2:45 – 4:00 pm

Screen Time, ADHD, and Attention Issues: How to Help Families Cope

Emily Cherkin, M.Ed.

Schools increasingly require kids to have an iPad for their 1:1 programs, fundamentally changing the educational experience and the way kids learn. Parents break down and give smartphones to their middle schoolers, but are not prepared for the emotional fallout of a 13-year-old with an iPhone. This is hard enough for neurotypical kids, but when you add executive functioning deficits and ADHD, the flame becomes a fire. In this breakout session, Emily Cherkin will offer practical solutions so you can return to your communities feeling empowered to help reduce screen time. Using a non-judgmental approach, this session will be filled with humor, storytelling, and interactive exercises.

Moving Forward with Real Solutions in our Schools

Joe Clement, Matt Miles, Melanie Hempe, & Holley East

Screen Schooled and Families Managing Media will present how to improve screen use in our schools. Matt Miles and Joe Clement will share the critical skills necessary for “21st century” learning and seek input on how best to help students be as happy and healthy as they can be. Melanie Hempe will share how to bridge the gap between parents and teachers on the best use of technology and how to set the right expectations from the start. Topics will include why screen-based instruction is not necessary for (and can be counter to) real-world skill development for today’s learners and how to balance the use of technology in the classroom. Presenters will also address how to use screens to enhance the educational experience, how to reduce screen distraction in the classroom, and how to partner with parents to reduce student screen addictions.

It’s Not You, It’s Your Phone: Talking with Parents and Their Children About “Persuasive Design”

Criscillia Benford, Ph.D.

Tech companies work hard to maximize the amount of time users spend with their mobile devices, deploying principles of psychological and social influence to sculpt user decision-making and emotional response. As a group, these UX design techniques are called “persuasive design.” This breakout session will cover how the most common persuasive design techniques work and how to spot them. The group will explore how educators and people in the helping professions can use this knowledge to connect with parents and their children, address both the stigma of “internet addiction” and the glamour of the “always-on” lifestyle, and help parents and their (older) children align their minute-to-minute use of mobile devices with how they wish they used them day-to-day and month-to-month.

Online Preschools: “Innovation” or Exploitation?

Roxana Marachi, Ph.D., & GERALYN Bywater-McLaughlin, M.Ed.

Are online preschools a new “innovation” for early learning? Or the newest form of exploitation of our youngest learners? This session will provide an overview of health and developmental research gaps in the introduction of technology into early learning spaces, with specific attention to concerns related to online preschools. Following an overview of research and practical implications, Marachi and Bywater-McLaughlin will invite discussion about the potential impacts of online programs on children’s social and emotional development, co-regulation, and health. They will also explore the roles of key organizations at the core of the tech, finance, political, and philanthropic sectors involved in the push for online preschool.

Breakout Session C: Saturday, April 21 10:15 – 11:30 am

Digital Disconnect: Teens Agreed to Participate and Survived

Jacques Brodeur

In 2016, 2017, and 2018, 26 high schools in France asked Edupax, from Quebec, Canada, to introduce the 10 Day Screen-Free Challenge to well over 6,000 students. Modeled after SMART (Student Media Awareness to Reduce Television) at Stanford University, students participated in the Screen-Free Challenge on a completely voluntary basis, with no pressure from parents or teachers, only positive reinforcement. Although screen time reduction initiatives often have trouble inspiring large numbers of students to participate, Brodeur will describe how hundreds of schools in Canada and France have helped students discover creative ways to escape their favorite “prisons” and find digital freedom. He will describe how the Screen-Free Challenge has affected students’ health and well-being, verbal and physical violence at school and at home, eating and sleeping, family conversations, reading, physical activity, and sports.

Why Can't Children Sit Still: Importance of Movement to Enhance Attention and Learning

Cris Rowan

Parents and teachers are increasingly keeping children sedentary and indoors, but at what cost to their physical and mental health? Screen overuse at home and school has resulted in sedentary, isolated, overstimulated, and neglected children who are not getting essential elements they need to grow and succeed. Children require movement, touch, human connection, and nature to optimize physical, mental, social, and cognitive development. Research shows 1 in 3 children presently enter school developmentally delayed, 1 in 4 are overweight or obese, and 1 in 6 have been diagnosed with a mental illness, which are all conditions related to screen overuse. This workshop raises questions regarding the impact of present day sedentary and isolative lifestyles on child development and learning, and proposes extensive home, classroom, gym, playground and community strategies to get kids ‘moving to learn’. Managing balance between technology use and critical factors for child growth and success will ensure sustainable futures for all children.

Have Children Lost Their Ability to Play? Why Does It Matter? What Can We Do?

Diane Levin, Ph.D.

From dependence on screens, technology, and media-linked toys, to exposure to commercial culture and marketing, as well as pressures on early childhood programs to emphasize teaching basic academic skills and testing, there are many factors at work today that can undermine the young children’s involvement in quality play. How does this situation undermine children’s development and learning? What are effective strategies for counteracting the harm and promoting the positive?

On the Front Lines: Using Your Knowledge and Passion to Effectuate Change

David Monahan, J.D. & Sriram Madhusoodanan, Corporate Accountability

This conference will add to your toolkit on the impacts of screen time. Now how do you translate your knowledge and passion into successful action to help reduce children’s screen time? David Monahan of Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and Sriram Madhusoodanan of Corporate Accountability discuss their successful campaigns to educate the public about the impacts of corporate practices upon children’s wellbeing, and to pressure companies to do better. What are the benefits and challenges of working with other advocates, experts, school boards, and other stakeholders to change deeply held perceptions? Should you extend a hopeful invitation to big business to confer, or just blast away at their bad practices? Share your own challenges and successes in changing perceptions and practices, and all will discuss how to take on the challenge of encouraging less screen time for kids when so many forces are promoting more.

Breakout Session D: Saturday, April 21, 1:45 – 3:00 pm

Reset Your Child's Brain

Victoria Dunckley, M.D.

This session will cover how to prepare for and implement a strict, extended electronic fast (screen fast) to “reset” a child’s nervous system. The fast allows the brain to obtain deep rest, resynchronizes the body clock, and helps normalize brain chemistry and stress hormones. Outwardly, we see dramatic improvements in emotional regulation, sleep, focus, and social behavior, increased creative and physical play, and shifts in family dynamics. Participants will be given exercises such as checklists so parents can rate chosen problem areas (e.g. missing homework or meltdowns) before and after the fast. Planning, parental support, troubleshooting, replacement activities, and managing school-based screen time will be addressed. Following a successful Reset, screen time management decisions take into account individual risk factors and parental wishes, and range from continuing strict abstinence to reintroduction of screens in a methodical manner based on individualized tolerability rather than blanket guidelines.

E-Books, Tablets, and Parent-Child Interaction

Jenny Radesky, M.D., & Tiffany Munzer, M.D.

This session will explore the differences between electronic and print book reading by young children and their parents, both from a theoretical standpoint and through discussion of emerging research. Specifically, we will present new research findings regarding the quantity and quality of verbal interactions between parents and toddlers while reading print versus e-books, as well as differences in nonverbal interactions such as reciprocity, posture, and shared attention. Relevance for practice with families will be reviewed, focusing on three key themes: 1) how design affordances of e-books and print books support or hinder parents in scaffolding children; 2) how parents can be empowered to recognize the ‘bells and whistles’ embedded in e-books and apps that distract from social interactions, and thus build their self-efficacy for choosing more educational activities; and 3) implications for institutions that promote shared book reading, such as Reach Out And Read, libraries, and schools.

Who's Raising Our Kids: Nurturing Human Values in a Snapchat World

Sharon Maxwell, Ph.D. & Chelsea Maxwell

Never before has technology embedded itself so deeply into the minute-to-minute reality of our lives. Social media and smartphones have become the new landscape where teens define themselves, develop relationships, and understand love and intimacy. In this constantly evolving landscape there are no rules, and teens are given little to no direction on how to navigate this new world with respect for themselves and others. This session explores the impact of social media on teens and gives parents and educators concrete strategies for how to raise children with human values in this increasingly digital world.

Working Across Difference: Tech, Access, & Screen Use in Diverse Populations

Makeda Keegan, Ph.D., & Velma LaPoint, Ph.D.

Presenters have conducted discussions, research, and interventions with ethnic, income, education, and age diverse parents and families on their children’s access to and use of technology including reduction of screen time. They will present information on their work and engage session participants on (a) their own views and experiences related to these issues; (b) barriers and problems to screen time reduction for children; (c) existing and possible strategies for screen time reduction; (d) culturally responsive strategies to reduce children’s screen time; (e) and a review of existing and needed policies that can support diverse families determining what constitutes appropriate screen access for children.