



# SCREEN SCHOOLED

TWO VETERAN TEACHERS EXPOSE HOW TECHNOLOGY OVERUSE IS  
MAKING OUR KIDS DUMBER

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## *Tips for parents and educators*

### **Is the digital version better than the “analog” version?**

- Question what you hear from anyone who makes tech use by kids sound too good to be true.
- Do the research. Look to unbiased and objective experts. Much of the “research” out there is being conducted by the companies selling it.
- Encourage children, especially young ones, to play in ways that cultivate imagination. A world of make-believe is way more cognitively enriching than predesigned worlds found in games, which are manifestations of others’ imaginations. Less is more.

### **Consider the primary purpose of the tool.**

- Get real. For a child, a screen is, at its core, a toy.
  - This is especially true for smartphones and tablets.
- Parents, stop texting kids when they are in school.
- When you allow your kids to have screen time, do it with your eyes wide open. Understand what they are doing and why they are doing it.
- Technology should work to enhance skills rather than replace them. Teach kids how to solve problems on their own before introducing technological aids.
- Teach kids to focus – truly focus – in ways that do not involve screens.
- Keep devices in common areas of the home, and forbid screens in kids’ bedrooms.
- Take kids’ devices away when you expect them to concentrate.
  - Schools should be “phone free zones”

### **Consider the goal of the lesson or activity.**

- Ask:
  - Does requiring use of the technology significantly enhance the lesson?
    - Or does it unnecessarily stifle creativity?
  - Am I ok with the course specific content being removed for technology specific instruction?
  - Will understanding this technology help my students in the future?
- Encourage face-to-face collaboration whenever possible.
- If you think schools are adding technology “for technology’s sake,” voice your concerns. School systems generally pay far more attention to parents than any other group

### **What is technology-use replacing?**

- Provide opportunities for kids to be kids – without screens.
- Allow kids time to be bored.
- Instill in kids the importance of knowledge.
  - Looking up something, and producing an answer is not the same as knowing it.
- Have face-to-face conversations with your children – about anything and everything – but especially about this issue.
- Make them disconnect for a significant portion of each day. Make real-life connections a priority.
- Set sensible limits on screen time, and stick to them.
- Parents, monitor your own screen time in the house and model appropriate screen-usage behavior.
- Replace screen time with friend/physical activity time.
- Bring your children to school events and extracurricular activities.
- Be aware of the signs of technology addiction, which is particularly damaging for kids who are already struggling in school.
- Work with your school’s parent-teacher organization to raise the issue and at least begin this discussion in your community.
- Take it up a notch: organize, reach out to politicians, raise money, and support state and local candidates who promote sane screen use for kids.