

## Your Question:

You asked about research and legislation addressing digital wellness.

## Our Response:

Topics surrounding digital devices have gained the interest of policymakers over the last few years, especially as access to devices, and subsequently screen time continues to increase. According to a [2020 survey](#) done by Common Sense Media, daily screen time ranges from 49 minutes for children under two years old to over three hours for five to eight year old children. A [2019 survey](#) found that tweens spend almost five hours a day using screens and teens spend over seven hours a day using screens not including the time spent on devices for school or homework. Further, a 2018 [report by EdWeek](#) found that 95% of principals surveyed believe students spend too much time on devices when not in school, and 23% of high school principals believe that in-school screen time is too much.

Some states include digital health and responsibility in their digital citizenship legislation, and a few states have enacted legislation related to screen time and devices. Below are examples of digital citizenship bills that include digital health as well as legislation limiting technology use or screen time in schools, though this is not an exhaustive list.

### State Examples:

#### *Digital Citizenship:*

- **Texas [SB 11](#) (enacted, 2019)** required the state board of education to incorporate instruction in digital citizenship into the district's curriculum and defined digital citizenship as "the standards of appropriate, **responsible, and healthy online behavior**, including the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act on all forms of digital communication."
- **Utah [HB 372](#) (enacted, 2020)** created the Digital Wellness, Citizenship, and Safe Technology Commission to identify best practices and compile resources on several topics, including cyberbullying, for training students in **healthy behavior related to technology use**. The bill required a mental health professional to serve on the commission.
- **Washington [SB 5449](#) (enacted, 2017)** defined digital citizenship as, "the norms of appropriate, **responsible, and healthy behavior related to current technology use**," including digital and media literacy, ethics, etiquette, and security. The term also includes the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, develop, produce and interpret media, as well as internet safety and cyberbullying prevention and response.

#### *Limiting Use/Screen Time:*

- **California [AB 272](#) (enacted, 2019)** explicitly authorized the governing body of a school district, a county office of education or a charter school to adopt a policy limiting or prohibiting student use of smartphones while students are at a school site. The bill specified circumstances in which students are exempted from such a prohibition, including in the case of an emergency, when an employee grants a student permission or when a smartphone is allowed through an IEP. The bill also addresses legislative findings related to phone use and screen time.

- **Georgia SR 87 (enacted, 2020)** created the Senate Study Committee on Digital Education and Screentime in Georgia Public Schools to “1) review the research relevant to digital education; 2) hear testimony from experts in the field on the effects of increased digital education and screen time on children; 3) analyze issues of data privacy related to digital education; 4) hear testimony from classroom teachers about the advantages and disadvantages of digital education; 5) hear testimony from parents about their experience with digital education; and 6) make recommendations to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the State Board of Education, the State School Superintendent, the Governor, and local boards of education based on such investigation to ensure that all Georgia education policy operates to the benefit of students and their families.”

### **Research and Additional Resources:**

- **The Future of Well-Being in a Tech-Saturated World** (PEW Research Center, 2018) surveyed technology experts, scholars and health specialists and asked them how the changes in digital life over the next decade will impact people’s overall well-being physically and mentally. The report contains detailed answers, as well as themes that emerged about the potential benefits, harms and remedies regarding future well-being and digital life.
- **3 Tips for Balanced Digital Wellness** (ISTE, 2019) outlines three strategies to empower students to be intentional about screen time.
- **Children, Adolescents, and the Media** (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013) discusses the pervasive nature of digital devices and media and includes recommendations for schools regarding media.
- **New Warnings on Screen Time, as Students Nationwide Move to E-Learning** (EdWeek, 2020) discusses findings from a meta-analysis on screen time from the journal JAMA Pediatrics and discusses how educators can help.
- **Can You Provide a Quality Preschool Education Over Zoom?** (EdSurge, 2021) discusses one approach to keeping young students engaged in school while limiting screen time where possible. The article also discusses the impact of screen time on young students and the impact of different types of screen time.
- **MRIs show screen time linked to lower brain development in preschoolers** (CNN, 2019) discusses a study that shows more than one hour a day using screens without parental involvement had lower levels of development in the brain’s white matter, which is critical in developing language, literacy and cognitive skills.
- **What do we really know about kids and screens?** (American Psychological Association, 2020) discusses what we know about the impact of screen time on children from existing research, as well as some of the shortcomings of this research.
- **Association of Television Viewing During Childhood With Poor Educational Achievement** (Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, 2005) examines the association between the time spent watching television in childhood and adolescence academic achievement. Academic achievement in this study was measured using a four-point scale ranging from “no qualifications” to “bachelor’s degree or higher.” The study found that increased television watching is associated with lower levels of educational attainment by early adulthood. Specifically, increased time watching television was associated with a lower chance of attaining a postsecondary degree by age 26 and a higher chance of having no formal qualifications.
- **Association Between Screen Media Use and Academic Performance Among Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis** (Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics, 2019) conducts a meta-analysis to examine the association of screen time and academic performance in children and adolescents specifically on composite scores, language and math. The study finds that television viewing

and video game playing, not overall screen media, seem to be negatively associated with academic performance and that this negative association seems greater for adolescents than for children. Authors suggest that each screen-based activity should be analyzed individually for its association with academic performance and that further research is needed on the association of other screen time activities and academic performance.