

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As summer comes upon us and students have more leisure time on their hands, we would like you to consider placing some guidelines around student screen time.

According to the Council on Communications and Media ([www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)), increased screen time has a negative effect on children. The major areas that may be impacted are:

- **Sleep:** Technology should be turned off at least 30 minutes before bedtime in order to allow your child's brain some time to settle down from the bright lights of screens and the stimulation of playing with electronics. Send tablets, phones and computers to bed early and keep them outside of your child's bedroom so they won't be tempted to play.
- **Attention Span:** a 2015 study by the Microsoft Corporation found that technology interfered with the ability to stay focused, and that the human attention span has reduced from 12 seconds to 8 seconds since the year 2000. Further, according to a study published in the Journal of Pediatrics in 2011, children and adults who were exposed to more screen time had a higher rate of diagnosed attention span disorders. The fragmented, action packed nature of electronic devices contributes to the problem.
- **Learning:** While technology puts a world of information at our fingertips, the Internet cannot replace human interaction. Too much screen-time can blunt imagination and resourcefulness, as well as impact the ability to build new memory. It is also important to think about what you do not want your children to learn without the benefit of adult support and discussion and filter their Internet use accordingly.
- **Mental and Physical Health:** Overuse of screen time is linked to higher rates of depression, anxiety and obesity.
- **Privacy:** Children are at risk of having their privacy compromised and/or being exposed to online predators. Talk to your children about internet safety. Commonsensemedia.org has many helpful ideas for building skills for digital citizenship.

To promote a healthy balance between media use and other activities, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends developing a **Family Media Plan** that addresses the health, education and entertainment needs of each child, in addition to needs of the family as a whole. You can get started on your own plan here:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>

For additional tips on media use, please see below.

# The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the following:

## Media Use Plan Tips:

- Screens should be kept out of kids' bedrooms. Put in place a "media curfew" at mealtime and bedtime, putting all devices away or plugging them into a charging station for the night.
- Excessive media use has been associated with **obesity**, lack of sleep, school problems, **aggression** and other **behavior issues**. Limit entertainment screen time to less than one or two hours per day.
- For children under 2, substitute unstructured play and human interaction for screen time. The opportunity to think creatively, problem solve and develop reasoning and motor skills is more valuable for the developing brain than passive media intake.
- Take an active role in your children's media education by co-viewing programs with them and discussing **values**.
- Look for media choices that are educational, or teach good values -- such as empathy, racial and ethnic tolerance. Choose programming that models good interpersonal skills for children to emulate.
- Be firm about not viewing content that is not age appropriate: sex, drugs, violence, etc. **Movie** and **TV ratings** exist for a reason, and online movie reviews also can help parents to stick to their rules.
- The Internet can be a wonderful place for learning. But it also is a place where kids can run into trouble. Keep the computer in a public part of your home, so you can check on what your kids are doing online and how much time they are spending there.
- Discuss with your children that every place they go on the Internet may be "remembered," and comments they make will stay there indefinitely. Impress upon them that they are leaving behind a "digital footprint." They should not take actions online that they would not want to be on the record for a very long time.
- Become familiar with popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. You may consider having your own profile on the social media sites your children use. By "friending" your kids, you can monitor their online presence. Pre-teens should not have accounts on social media sites. If you have

young children, you can create accounts on sites that are designed specifically for kids their age.

- Talk to them about being good "digital citizens," and discuss the serious consequences of online bullying. If your child is the victim of **cyberbullying**, it is important to take action with the other parents and the school if appropriate. Attend to children's and **teens' mental health** needs promptly if they are being bullied online, and consider separating them from the social media platforms where bullying occurs.
- Make sure kids of all ages know that it is not appropriate or smart to send or receive pictures of people without clothing, or **sexy text messages**, no matter whether they are texting friends or strangers.
- If you're unsure of the quality of the "media diet" in your household, consult with your children's pediatrician on what your kids are viewing, how much time they are spending with media, and privacy and safety issues associated with social media and Internet use.