


# Less is more, parents want to reduce tech in schools

 [screenagersmovie.com/tech-talk-tuesdays/less-is-more-parents-want-to-reduce-tech-in-schools](https://screenagersmovie.com/tech-talk-tuesdays/less-is-more-parents-want-to-reduce-tech-in-schools)

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Last week *The New York Times* ran a story titled, [“The Digital Gap Between the Rich and Poor Kids is Not What We Expected.”](#) Research shows that low-income kids spend about 2 hours more a day on screens outside of school—due to many factors, such as less access to after school enriching experiences. The article looks at concerns that lower-income public schools will become screen saturated, while private schools will have more resources for less screen saturation.

The author writes about how affluent parents, generally with students in private schools, are demanding less screen time in school. The reality is, it is not only wealthy parents that are raising concerns about the amount of screen time in schools, but parents from all socioeconomic backgrounds are doing so.

Fact: Schools experience pressure to have tech on their campuses from tech companies, administration, and others. Schools want to do well by their students and tech has been sold as a quick fix. For example, schools keep hearing from tech and curriculum companies that ways to “personalize and customize learning” is right around the corner. Unfortunately, it has been a very long corner with no impressive results yet.

A quick fix example in the NYT article that shocked me is that Utah is rolling out an [online preschool](#), which 10,000 children are enrolled thus far—no joke. Given that Utah lacks a state-funded traditional preschool program, one can see how the screen has stepped in.

Older students know when screen time is not adding value. Two weeks ago I was speaking at a large education conference where I heard this often. For example, a high school World History teacher said that whenever he introduces a computer-based program, students immediately chime in and ask, “What is the purpose of it, why even do it online?”

There is data about how there may be more non-productive, non-effective screen time in public schools than in private schools. One example comes from the national [survey](#) my team and I conducted last year about cell phones in schools where we found that public middle schools are much more likely to allow students to carry phones all day (66%) compared to private schools (34%) where phones are kept in lockers or backpacks. When students are allowed to carry their phones, research shows they are much more likely to sneak them in class. There is no judgment here—they are *not* bad students if they sneak—it is just very hard for some students to resist the pull of everything happening on their personal phone. Research shows grades and emotional well being are improved with the policies that private schools are doing more often.

Last week I spoke to Kristina Rodgers, the principal at my daughter's public high school in Seattle where they changed their cell phone policy this year to ban access during class. She said the new rule has been easy to enforce and the results are apparent by the way kids are focusing more than before. At the recent curriculum night, parents burst out in applause when the new policy was mentioned.

Rodgers told me how discouraging it is that her school is the only public high school out of 12 in the area that has her policy while several of the elite private high schools in the area have banned phones during class time.

Many of you know about our site [AwayForTheDay.org](http://AwayForTheDay.org) that gives tools to get better phone policies in schools and we are **super excited** that, due to parent and teacher request, we have created posters that can be put up in schools! Click [HERE](#), and press the button that says "free posters," download them, and then you will see several to choose from. These posters will help reinforce good cell phone practices.

We are looking for feedback from people whose school has made a change to their cell phone policy in the past year. If your school has made a change recently, would you mind [clicking here](#) to answer 3 quick questions?

In summary, the reason the NYT article is important is that it addresses one of the issues I am most passionate about: How to get parents and schools working together to do best by our children. All parents and educators want kids to learn and do wonderful things in school and to have meaningful interactions with teachers, peers, and staff. No one wants children glued to screens all day in school.

Questions to discuss for this week's TTT:

- Do you have friends at different schools that have different technology use policies and practices? If so, how do they differ?
- When is a screen-based activity used in a class in a way that seems really useful?
- When is one used that does not seem useful?
- Do you agree or disagree with this statement: "A screen-based program is able to motivate and get students excited about learning material as well as a good teacher."

### **Now Available for Educators: A New Professional Development Resource**

Thousands of schools around the world have presented Screenagers to their students, staff, and families, and many tell us they are committed to continuing the conversation around supporting screen time balance for their students. Educators can now access the film plus a 3-part Professional Development series developed by Learners Edge and Screenagers to dramatically impact the culture of learning in your school. Request more information about this 6-hour ready-to-use [Professional Development module](#).