Challenge

Harmful effects of too much screen time

Increased screen time as a result of learning at home is leading many parents to recognize that not all screen time is created equally. In short, content and context matter. As you evaluate your child's screen time, it helps to shift the focus to monitoring how the device is used rather than how much.

Video chats with family members, educational software, and virtual story time are all examples of world-extending screen uses. Gaming and social media use, on the other hand, are examples of entertainment. They both can have a place in your child's life (if your child is of the appropriate age), but they should not take up too much time. Acknowledge the generational divide that may exist—these examples of social interaction are critical for your children.

Chip Donohue, the founding director of the Technology in Early Childhood Center at Erikson Institute, offers this guidance:

Relationships matter most.

Encourage the use of software as a means to form connections—to teachers, to family, to each other. Educational software should exist in an ecosystem in which students talk about, extend, and apply their online learning.

Proper pedagogy complements technology tools.

Don't think simply of what educational technology "delivers" to your children but of how they use it to make or create something. That's learning!

Technology-mediated family engagement works.

How can technology connect your child to "family" (like grandparents or even close friends)? Think about learning allies who you have not yet engaged as partners in your child's learning.

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