

Children and Screen Time



A Summary from the
Santa Clara County
Office of Education

Published by the Office of the Superintendent, June 2016

great deal of activity in the brain. But when the toddler is watching someone they know or even someone they don't know on a webcam during a video chat, "there's a whole lot of brain activity going on," Brown said. "What we learn is that we as humans are very much social beasts and we are really learning by engaging with other humans and so the more that a digital technology can approximate that, the more a young child can get out of it," Brown said.⁵

"Media is just another environment and parents just need to know that they're going to use the same rules in this different environment," said Brown. "And so you would sit down in the real world and play with your child, you would pretend and have a tea party. Well the same rules apply. You don't just park your kid in front of a screen and make them go play by themselves. If you sit down and play with them on that screen, on that technology, they're going to get more out of it."

Brown also said parents need to do their homework when it comes to finding apps for their children. There are thousands of apps that are listed as educational, but there is little research validating their quality. "There's a lot more to education than swiping and pointing and that does not make an educational app," she said. The doctors' group recommends parents look to other organizations that focus on curating and rating content for children, including Common Sense Media.

For older kids, "What we're really wanting to put out there is that life balance is important and everything in moderation and so yeah, you do want to keep an eye on how much time your child is spending in front of a screen, just as you want to keep an eye on how much they're doing something else," Brown said. "You want to make sure that they have a balance to their life."

It's also important to know when to turn the screens off. "There's a time and place that's appropriate and you want to have tech-free zones," she said, which could include the family dinner table and moving laptops, tablets and phones out of children's bedrooms overnight.

The quality of content your child engages in is also more important than the platform or the time they spend with it, writes Brown, so parents are advised to prioritize how their children spend their time rather than just setting a time limit. The overall message, said Brown, is that while technology keeps changing, parenting has not: The importance of setting limits, teaching kindness and being involved won't change based on the latest app children are using.

Recommendations for Parents

The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) supports the following key messages being promoted by the AAP prior to the official release of their recommendations in October 2016.

⁵ <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/06/health/screen-time-rules-change-pediatricians/index.html>

- ***Media is just another environment.*** Children do the same things they have always done, only virtually. Like any environment, media can have positive and negative effects.
- ***Parenting has not changed.*** The same parenting rules apply to your children's real

- **Create *tech-free zones*.** Preserve

