

Introduction to the Action Kit

This Action Kit has been created by the Screens in Schools [Work Group](#) of the Children's Screen Time Action Network. The [Action Network](#), formed in 2017, is a coalition of practitioners, educators, and advocates working to promote a healthy childhood by reducing the amount of time kids spend with digital devices. The Action Network is a project of the [Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood](#).

The Screens in Schools Work Group was formed at the inaugural conference of the Children's Screen Time Action Network. After an eye-opening keynote by *Screen Schooled* authors (and future Work Group members) Joe Clement and Matt Miles, a group of parents and teachers met over lunch and discussed our concerns about edtech. Parents expressed frustration that their efforts to limit and monitor their children's media use were undermined by online homework assignments. Educators shared how the rise of edtech has contributed to the de-professionalization of the teaching profession and demoralization. Everyone voiced their concern at how much time students were spending on computers and tablets at school and the effects that was having on children's wellbeing and learning. And we all agreed we had to do something about it.

After the conference, the Work Group met regularly online (we're not technophobes!). We supported and coached one another as we advocated for less screen use in our own school districts. We shared resources and strategies. And we soon realized that the tools we were creating, as well as the wisdom we were gaining from our successes and struggles, could benefit a lot more people than our 40 Work Group members.

The Screens in Schools Action Kit is the very first by-teachers and parents, for-teachers and parents resource to address the overuse of edtech in schools. We created this Action Kit so the parents and teachers who follow in our footsteps don't have to reinvent the wheel. Whether you're a seasoned activist or contemplating raising a concern with your school for the very first time, we believe the Action Kit will help you advocate more effectively and efficiently.

*As concerned parents, teachers, and activists, we insist that our schools embrace their **duty of care** and that public funds do not contribute further to the harm that is already being done to children and their education by the proliferation of digital devices and computer-based learning.*

*We also insist that public schools employ the **precautionary principle**: With little proven benefit and potentially great harm, it is prudent to limit the use of digital devices in schools until such time as these devices can be shown to be safe for children and good for their learning.*

Background: Our Beliefs about Edtech

The Action Network supports the use of technology in the classroom as a tool for creativity, communication, and research. We reject the introduction of technology that results in displacing human interaction with screen interaction, usually with no true benefit for students. We believe that edtech should be used very sparingly in elementary school classrooms, if at all, and support a gradual increase in digital devices and computers as children move through middle and high school. We insist that school administrators articulate why children are using screens, and never have children use tablets or computers because it is trendy or fun, or to justify their investments in hardware.

How to Use the Action Kit:

The Action Kit has many documents that provide further background about the issue of screens in schools, but it is not intended to be an exhaustive collection, or to duplicate the excellent [resource library](#) hosted by the Action Network. While some may wish to read the Action Kit cover-to-cover, it is designed to make it easy for you to select the resources and tools that will be most helpful to your advocacy.

Under [The Problem](#), you'll find 2-3 page documents that summarize the different effects of overuse of digital devices. These pieces can be helpful in educating potential allies and convincing skeptical policymakers.

In [Tools for Parents](#), you'll find short, off-the-shelf documents like petitions and factsheets that could be used as-is or adapted to a particular group's needs.

[Tools for Educators](#) includes documents that would be of particular interest to educators and their unions, such as educator blogs about edtech, and examples of teachers organizing around edtech issues.

Finally, for more in-depth reading, the Action Kit includes a [Further Reading](#) section with links to some of the more valuable articles and comprehensive treatments of the subject that have been produced in the last few years.